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7 June 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Open-Office Planning--Meeting with Mr. Peter I. Karp,
Associate Principal, RTKL Associates, Inc.

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1. Today, [redacted] and I met with Mr. Peter I. Karp, an expert on open-office layouts, to have a general discussion on this subject. Mr. Karp began by stating that open-office arrangements are not just a bunch of cubicles placed together, but must be considered as an entire system relating to furnishings, visual factors, acoustics, and HVAC. He said that there are two primary advantages to open-office arrangements, the first being greater flexibility in terms of location and relocation of workstations; that one can reconfigure space without undergoing construction. He further stated that raised floors in this arrangement provide for maximum flexibility. The second advantage he noted is that, if planned correctly, more people can occupy less space. When systems furniture is utilized in connection with open offices, he said that it requires more construction, more engineering, and reduces flexibility. Rather than use systems furniture, the preference is to go the way we are going in the Agency, with stand-alone desks and free-standing partitions.

2. Mr. Karp said that in an effective open-office arrangement, one is dealing with ambient lighting in the entire work area, rather than task lighting on a specific desk or at a specific workstation area. He said that the kind of lighting and the air distribution are critical to the effectiveness of an open-office arrangement.

3. Mr. Karp advised that the minute you start to put up vertical items in an open-space office, regardless of how high, you interfere with lighting, reflections, and HVAC. In response to a specific query, he said that the use of 80-inch panels is an attempt to create private offices in an open-office system. He further stated that 80-inch panels will adversely affect lighting and HVAC. The only difference between an 80-inch panel and a 60-inch panel is perceived privacy. The problem with privacy, he said, is a problem of perception versus reality. Even though

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acoustical arrangements can be just as effective in an open-office plan as compared with private offices, the perception of open-office layouts on the part of most people is that of a lack of privacy. Mr. Karp said that, with proper planning, sound can be absorbed in floor coverings and ceiling tiles in an open-office arrangement. He also said that the utilization of white sound, which is a background noise like the sound of air coming out of an air conditioning system, will also dampen sound in the work place. He said that open-office layouts are most effective and successful if combined with a minimum number of private offices and conference areas.

4. ~~Mr. Karp said that in order for open-office planning to be truly accepted, one must embark upon a concentrated PR effort and an educational campaign to make the customer knowledgeable.~~ He reiterated several times that the open-office plan must be presented as a complete design, and the customer must be involved in the design process. In fact, one of the keys to success is to involve the customer totally in the planning process (this does not merely mean that the customer decides who is going to sit where, but is brought into the entire layout plan).

5. I explained to him some of the constraints that confront the Agency in terms of security, limited space, and a very vibrant organization which is constantly in a state of flux. Given all of these considerations, including our overriding consciousness of security factors, ~~Mr. Karp emphasized that he would recommend pursuing open-office layouts in our space.~~ He said that ~~when confronted with any amount of space under 135 square feet of space per person, one has no choice but to go with open-office landscaping.~~

6. Mr. Karp said that color schemes and signage are very important in breaking up the monotony of open-office arrangements. He talked about several projects that RTKL had undertaken where they had ceiling-mounted signage that made a significant difference in allowing people to identify specific work areas. ~~I advised him that we were putting accented walls in the New Headquarters Building to add variety to the work space.~~ He suggested ~~that we change the lighting on that accented wall.~~ He also suggested ~~that we change the lighting in the reception areas of those work spaces, including, perhaps, changing the colors of the lights.~~ I asked him, ~~if we were confronted with having to put up 80-inch partitions in a given area, what could we do.~~ Mr. Karp said that ~~we should mix the 80-inch partitions~~

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~~with lower partitions to the maximum extent practicable.~~ He further cautioned us of the importance of the location of hallways within the work area, and he also recommended that we ~~try to get some glazed paneling into the 80-inch partitions.~~

7. ~~I asked him if he would be willing to provide a briefing to our Executive Committee at some future date on open-office landscaping, and he said he would.~~ Further, I mentioned that we had to educate the managers in the CIA as to the effectiveness of open-office planning. Toward that end, I mentioned that we have a training course called "Managing in CIA" and asked if he would be willing, for a fee, to provide briefings to the managers in this course and, again, he said he would. I intend to follow this up with a recommendation to the Director of Training and Education.

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John M. Ray

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